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## **Breaking Up Is Hard To Do.**

### **Dissolving Royal and Noble Marriages in Eleventh-Century Germany\***

Alison Creber

**Abstract:** Around 1069 four elite German men—Henry IV of Germany, Rudolf of Rheinfelden, Eckbert of Brunswick, and Welf IV of Bavaria—tried to dissolve their marriages to their respective wives: Bertha of Savoy, Adelaide of Savoy, Immilla of Turin, and Ethelinde of Northeim. This paper argues that these men reinforced each other's decision to do so; it further argues that a key, but previously overlooked, aspect of these cases is that three of these women (Bertha, Adelaide and Immilla) were closely related to one another. The first section focuses narrowly on Henry IV's attempt to repudiate his wife, Bertha, and the rich documentation this produced. Then Henry's actions are compared and contrasted with the contemporaneous attempts of Rudolf, Eckbert, and Welf to end their own marriages. Given the kinship between Bertha, Adelaide and Immilla, this paper argues that Henry, Rudolf and Eckbert wished not only to dissolve their marriages, but also to sever their ties with their wives' natal dynasty, and specifically with Adelaide of Turin, sister of Immilla, mother of Bertha and Adelaide, and ruler of the mark of Turin. Yet, partly due to the actions of Adelaide of Turin, it was hard for these men to 'break up' with their wives. In contrast with Ethelinde's kin, who failed to stop her repudiation, Adelaide mobilised diplomatic and military support to ensure that her daughters' marriages were not dissolved.

**Key words:** marriage; divorce; adultery; vendetta; Henry IV of Germany; Adelaide of Turin

A recent study of the structure and spread of divorce in modern Massachusetts indicates that the probability of a couple's divorcing increases if their relatives, their friends, or even friends-of-friends, divorce.<sup>1</sup> Building on the view that modern divorce can spread through a social network like a virus, encouraging others to end their own marriages, it is the contention of this paper that 'divorce' was similarly 'contagious' among eleventh-century German elites. There

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<sup>1</sup> R. McDermott et al, 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do, Except When Everyone Else is Doing it Too: The Spread of Divorce over 32 years in a Large Social Network', *Social Forces* 92 (2013), pp. 491-519.

are, of course, crucial differences between large-scale studies of modern marriage and divorce, and the miniature divorce ‘epidemic’ considered here. In particular, conceptions of modern marriage and divorce, in which a valid marriage is held to have existed and then to have ended, leaving both spouses free to remarry, are quite different from eleventh-century royal and aristocratic marriage and ‘divorce’, in which a marriage was held never to have been valid in the first place, or in which spouses were permitted to separate, but not remarry.

Moreover, potentially different factors inform medieval and modern cost-benefit analyses of remaining married versus dissolving a relationship. Among the medieval elite marriages were primarily political: spouses were chosen to increase the power of dynasties by creating and strengthening alliances, by making territorial gains, and by having legitimate heirs to secure the inheritance and succession of their dynasties.<sup>2</sup> This was not a particularly flexible way of making alliances, and nor was it intended to be. If individuals, or kin-groups, did not gain what they had hoped from marital alliances in terms of power, wealth and/or the birth of legitimate offspring, it could be difficult to dissolve one marriage in favour of another potentially more beneficial one.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless between 1068 and 1071 four elite German men attempted to dissolve their marriages to their respective wives.

This article takes as its starting point the unsuccessful attempt of Henry IV of Germany (r.1056-1106) to end his marriage to Bertha of Savoy (d.1087) in 1069. Henry’s attempt to dissolve his marriage has a central place in interpretations of his reign.<sup>4</sup> Yet key aspects of this case, particularly the contemporaneous attempts of other men to end their own marriages, and the significance of Bertha’s natal dynasty, have not previously been examined. Henry’s reasons

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<sup>2</sup> T. Weller, *Die Heiratspolitik des deutschen Hochadels im 12. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> D. d’Avray, *Dissolving Royal Marriages: A Documentary History, 860-1600* (Cambridge, 2014); D. d’Avray, *Papacy, Monarchy and Marriage, 860-1600* (Cambridge, 2015); D. d’Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society* (Oxford, 2004), esp. pp. 74-99.

<sup>4</sup> M. McLaughlin, ‘Disgusting Acts of Shamelessness: Sexual Misconduct and the Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Eleventh Century’, *Early Medieval Europe* 19 (2011), pp. 312-31; T. Struve, ‘War Heinrich IV ein Wüstling? Szenen einer Ehe am salischen Hofe’, in O. Münsch and T. Zotz (eds.), *Scientia veritatis. Festschrift für Hubert Mordek zum 65. Geburtstag* (Ostfildern, 2004), pp. 273-88.

for seeking to end his marriage are not entirely clear, but contemporary sources stress his youth, his unwillingness to consummate his marriage with Bertha, and his desire to find another wife. Modern historians, if they discuss Henry's motives at all, tend to accept this view of Henry's actions as being primarily personal. Yet, while attempts to end a marriage might be presented in personal terms, royal and aristocratic marriages were far from private. They were politically and dynastically crucial, and members of the wider polity (temporal and ecclesiastical princes alike) had a stake in their successful outcomes. Attempts to dissolve royal marriages thus had serious political ramifications.

This article begins with an overview of Henry and Bertha's marriage and of the events of 1069 as described in contemporary sources. Henry's actions are then compared with those of several of his contemporaries. For Henry was not alone in attempting to dissolve his marriage in 1069: at about this time, three noblemen, Eckbert of Brunswick (d.1068), Rudolf of Rheinfelden (d.1080) and Welf IV of Bavaria (d.1101), were also attempting to dissolve their respective marriages to Immilla of Turin (d.1078), Adelaide of Savoy (d.1079) and Ethelinde of Norheim (d. after 1075). There are crucial differences between kings and even high-status noblemen, but Eckbert, Rudolf and Welf were some of the most influential princes in the eleventh-century German empire. Eckbert and Rudolf, in particular, were players at a quasi-regal level of politics: Eckbert was Henry's paternal cousin, and Rudolf was Henry's brother-in-law, who later became anti-king of Germany (r.1077-79).

An examination of these cases helps to shed further light on Henry's actions and intentions in 1069 and strongly suggests that Henry's motivation was political as much as personal. Particularly important, but not previously emphasized, is the fact that three of these women were closely related to one another. Henry's repudiation of Bertha was thus an attempt not only to end his marriage to her, but also to sever his ties with her natal dynasty. Moreover, while most historians rightly view Henry's unsuccessful repudiation of Bertha as being due to

the opposition of Pope Alexander II and Peter Damian to his actions, the argument put forward here is that Bertha's mother, Adelaide of Turin, also played an important role. She mobilized diplomatic and military pressure to ensure that her kinswomen were not repudiated.

There are few examples of German rulers attempting to dissolve their marriages between the tenth and twelfth centuries: other than Henry IV, there is only the dissolution of Frederick Barbarossa's (r.1152-90) marriage to Adela of Vohburg and, arguably, the dissolution of Henry the Fowler's (r.919-36) marriage to Hatheburg of Merseburg in 909, before Henry became king of Germany.<sup>5</sup> By contrast for the same period in France there are numerous examples of royal 'divorces'. With the exception of Henry I (r.1031-1060), every French king from Robert II (r.996-1031) to Philip II Augustus (r.1180-1223) tried to dissolve at least one of his marriages.<sup>6</sup>

Largely based on these French royal cases, Georges Duby put forward his influential 'two models' theory of medieval marriage.<sup>7</sup> Duby argued that there was a conflict between the ecclesiastical model of marriage, which emphasised Church jurisdiction over marriage, defined as monogamous, exogamous, and indissoluble, and the royal and aristocratic model of marriage, which permitted divorce and remarriage, as well as marriages among close kin. According to Duby, 'the tension between the ecclesiastical and the lay model of marriage was most acute' in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter, the ecclesiastical model was imposed on an unwillingly laity, and it became increasingly difficult to dissolve one marriage and marry again.

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<sup>5</sup> Weller, *Heiratspolitik*, 76, 84-90; H. Diwald, *Heinrich der Erste. Die Gründung des Deutschen Reiches* (Bergisch Gladbach, 1987), pp. 132-144.

<sup>6</sup> D'Avray, *Dissolving*, chs. 2-4; G. Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. E. Forster (Baltimore and London, 1978), 29-80.

<sup>7</sup> Duby, *Marriage*, ch. 1; G. Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest. The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. B. Bray (Chicago, 1983), esp. pp. 3-21.

<sup>8</sup> Duby, *Marriage*, pp. 40, 45.

Christopher Brooke and David d'Avray argue against Duby's view that the Church could have *compelled* monarchs and aristocrats to accept the ecclesiastical model of marriage. They maintain that there was a general acceptance of Church regulation of marriage among the laity because this suited their interests, as they were able to use and abuse canon law to dissolve their marriages.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, Constance Bouchard and Sara McDougall reject Duby's binary view of 'the Church' and the laity, emphasising the shared ethos and overlapping interests of clerical and lay elites.<sup>10</sup> Building on Bouchard's re-assessment of the impact of canon law on eleventh-century royal and aristocratic marriages, McDougall rejects the view of canon law as a monolithic body of law that nobles and ecclesiastics across eleventh-century Europe would have understood in broadly similar terms. Instead, McDougall stresses that strategic, dynastic and political concerns played a far greater role than canon law in whether or not a marriage was dissolved.

This article follows McDougall in investigating the reasons for four attempted repudiations in eleventh-century Germany: What did a king or nobleman hope to gain when he attempted to dissolve his marriage and why? How did he attempt to justify what he was doing? What did contemporaries make of his actions? And how successful was he?

### ***I: Henry IV of Germany and Bertha of Savoy***

Henry IV of Germany was the son of Henry III of Germany (r.1039-56) and Agnes of Poitou (d.1077). In December 1055 the five-year-old Henry was betrothed to four-year-old Bertha of Savoy, who was the daughter of Adelaide of Turin (c.1020-91) and Otto of Savoy (d.1057/60).<sup>11</sup> The betrothal is often described in tactical terms, as a counterweight to the power

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<sup>9</sup> C. Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 126-7; d'Avray, *Marriage*, p. 99.

<sup>10</sup> C.B. Bouchard, 'Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', *Speculum* 56 (1981), pp. 268-287; S. McDougall, 'The Making of Marriage in Medieval France', *Journal of Family History* 38 (2013), pp. 103-121.

<sup>11</sup> I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056-1106* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 109-11; G. Althoff, *Heinrich IV* (Darmstadt, 2006), pp. 73-5; A. Bühler, 'Kaiser Heinrich IV und Bertha von Turin – Eine schwierige Ehe im

bloc created by the marriage of Beatrice of Tuscany (c. 1020-76) and the imperial rebel Godfrey ‘the Bearded’ of Lotharingia (d.1069) in 1054.<sup>12</sup> To some extent this narrow objective was negated when Beatrice and Godfrey reconciled with Henry III in 1056.<sup>13</sup> Yet mistrust continued on both sides and flared up again in the mid-1060s at the same time that Bertha and Henry’s marriage was completed.<sup>14</sup> For the imperial dynasty the betrothal and marriage of Henry and Bertha also brought other benefits: wealth in the form of Bertha’s dowry, and powerful allies in her parents, Otto and Adelaide, who ruled the strategically-important mark of Turin and the county of Savoy.<sup>15</sup>

Additional evidence of the importance of this alliance can be seen in four further marriages which connected Bertha’s kin, if only tangentially, with the imperial family. (See genealogical table 1.) In the 1030s Bertha’s mother, Adelaide of Turin, married, as her first husband, Hermann IV, duke of Swabia (r.1030-38).<sup>16</sup> Hermann was the son of Gisela of Swabia by her second husband, Ernest I of Swabia.<sup>17</sup> Since Gisela’s third husband was Emperor Conrad II (r.1027-39), Hermann was half-brother to the future Emperor Henry III. Then in the 1060s, shortly after Bertha was betrothed to Henry, her maternal aunt, Immilla of Turin, married Eckbert I, count of Brunswick (r.1057-68).<sup>18</sup> Eckbert was Henry’s first cousin and part of the

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Spiegel der Urkunden’, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 83 (2001), pp. 37-61; C. Zey, ‘Frauen und Töchter der salischen Herrscher. Zum Wandel salischer Heiratspolitik in der Krise’, in T. Struve (ed.), *Die Salier, Das Reich und der Niederrhein* (Cologne, 2008), pp. 72-4; C. Zey, ‘“Scheidung” zu Recht? Die Trennungsabsicht von Heinrich IV im Jahr 1069’, in H. Seibert and G. Thoma (ed.), *Von Sachsen bis Jerusalem. Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel der Zeit* (Munich, 2004), pp. 163-83; G. Meyer von Knonau, *Jahrbücher des deutschen Reiches unter Heinrich IV und Heinrich V*, 7 vols (Leipzig, 1890-1909) (hereafter MvK), vol. I, pp. 612-4; vol. IV, pp. 423-5, 541-3.

<sup>12</sup> MvK, vol. I, p. 10. On this marriage and Henry III’s response: E. Goetz, *Beatrix von Canossa und Tuszien. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des 11. Jahrhunderts* (Sigmaringen, 1995), esp. pp. 20-9.

<sup>13</sup> Zey, ‘Frauen’, p. 66.

<sup>14</sup> MvK, vol. I, pp. 550-2.

<sup>15</sup> G. Sergi, *I confini del potere. Marche e signorie fra due regni medievali* (Turin, 1995), chs. 3-5; C.W. Previté-Orton, *The Early History of the House of Savoy (1000-1233)* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 185-260.

<sup>16</sup> Hermann of Reichenau, *Chronicon*, (ed.) G.H. Pertz, MGH SS 5 (Hannover, 1844), a.1036, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Gisela married: 1) Bruno of Brunswick; 2) Ernest of Swabia; 3) Emperor Conrad II: H. Wolfram, *Konrad II, 990-1039* (Munich, 2000), pp. 50-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo*, (ed.) K. Nass, MGH SS 37 (Hanover, 2006), a.1067, p. 409.

inner circle of the imperial court.<sup>19</sup> At about this time, Bertha's brother, Peter of Turin, married another of Henry's first cousins: Agnes II of Poitou.<sup>20</sup> Finally Bertha's sister, Adelaide of Savoy, married Rudolf of Rheinfelden, duke of Swabia (r.1057-79). Rudolf was already related to the imperial family by marriage: he had briefly been married to Henry IV's sister, Matilda of Germany, before her death in 1060.<sup>21</sup> Rudolf's marriage to Adelaide, which probably took place c.1062, renewed Rudolf's alliance with the imperial family.<sup>22</sup> It also continued the trend of intermarriages between women from Adelaide's dynasty and the dukes of Swabia, begun by her mother's marriage to Herman IV, which ensured co-ordination between the contiguous regions of Swabia, Savoy and Piedmont.<sup>23</sup>

After the betrothal Bertha spent much of her time in Germany.<sup>24</sup> She may have been raised by Henry's mother, Empress Agnes, at the imperial court.<sup>25</sup> Then, ten-and-a-half years after the betrothal the fifteen-year-old Bertha was crowned in June 1066, and married to Henry the following month.<sup>26</sup> Henry had been king in name since he was a child as his father, Henry III, died in 1056 when Henry IV was only six years old.<sup>27</sup> Establishing himself as king *in fact* once he reached the age of majority in 1065 was difficult: he sought to strengthen his claim to rule with the support of powerful aristocrats. Marriage to Bertha was one means of ensuring such support. Bertha's father, Otto, had died in around 1060, before the marriage was

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<sup>19</sup> Lampert of Hersfeld, *Annales*, in O. Holder-Egger (ed.), *Lamperti monachi Hersfeldensis Opera*, MGH SS rer Germ 38 (Hanover, 1894), a.1057, p. 71; Robinson, *Henry*, p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> A.M. Patrone, 'Agnese di Poitiers', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1960), p. 437.

<sup>21</sup> Hlawitschka, 'Herkunft', p. 180; Zey, 'Frauen' pp. 66-8.

<sup>22</sup> Zey, 'Frauen', p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> E. Bonanate, 'Reti parentali e ampliamento di orizzonti di una famiglia marchionale: la politica matrimoniale degli Arduinici nel secolo XI', *Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino* 115 (2017), pp. 5-40.

<sup>24</sup> T. Struve et al (eds.), *Regesta imperii III. Salisches Haus, 1024-1125: Teil. 2: 1056-1125. 3. Abteilung: Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Heinrich IV, 1056(1050)-1106* (2nd edition, Cologne, 2010) (hereafter RI III,2,3), nos. 47, 57, 189; D. von Gladiss and A. Gawlik (eds.), *Die Urkunden Heinrichs IV*, MGH Diplomata 6, 3 vols. (Berlin, Weimar, Hannover, 1941-1978) (hereafter DD HIV), no. 156 (1065).

<sup>25</sup> Bühler, 'Kaiser', pp. 38, 60; MvK, vol. I, p. 176; Zey, 'Frauen' p. 73.

<sup>26</sup> RI III,2,3 nos. 446, 448.

<sup>27</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, pp. 19-62; Althoff, *Heinrich*, pp. 41-85.



completed but her mother, Adelaide, proved to be a strong and capable ruler both of the mark of Turin and Otto's county of Savoy.

Contemporaries also connected the completion of the marriage with Henry's recovery from a serious illness in May 1066.<sup>28</sup> The implication is that Henry's brush with mortality convinced him, and the princes of the realm, of his need to marry and produce an heir.<sup>29</sup> Although he makes no reference to illness, the Saxon monk Bruno of Merseburg, who was vehemently opposed to Henry, recorded that Henry married Bertha only after pressure was brought to bear on him: '[Henry] married his noble and beautiful wife unwillingly, at the urging of the princes'.<sup>30</sup> Bruno, writing c.1082/5, made this assertion in the knowledge that Henry would attempt to repudiate Bertha only three years later. The factors which had made the marriage necessary in 1066 were evidently no longer compelling by 1069. Why was this?

There are four main sources for Henry's actions in 1069: Henry's diplomata, a letter written by Archbishop Siegfried of Mainz (r.1060-84) to Pope Alexander II (r.1061-73) in June 1069, the anonymous continuation of the *Annales Altahenses maiores* (*Greater Annals of Niederaltaich*, written c.1073/5), and the *Annals* of Lampert of Hersfeld (written c.1077-80).<sup>31</sup> There are brief references to Henry's attempt to dissolve his marriage in other contemporary works, but narrative sources written in Henry's honour make no mention of his relationship with Bertha.<sup>32</sup> The fullest account is found in Lampert's work. Lampert was a monk at Hersfeld (1058-81) and later perhaps abbot of Hasungen (r.1081-85).<sup>33</sup> Although he was writing in an

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<sup>28</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1066, pp. 103-4; *Annales Altahenses*, a.1066, pp. 71-2.

<sup>29</sup> Bühler, 'Heinrich', pp. 39-40; G. Tellenbach, 'Der Charakter Kaiser Heinrichs IV. Zugleich ein Versuch über die Erkennbarkeit menschlicher Individualität im hohen Mittelalter', in G. Althoff, et al (eds.), *Person und Gemeinschaft im Mittelalter. Karl Schmid zum 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen 1988), p. 347.

<sup>30</sup> Bruno of Merseburg, *Saxonicum bellum*, in H-E. Lohmann (ed.), *Brunos Buch vom Sachsenkrieg*, MGH Dt MA 2 (Leipzig, 1937), ch.6, pp. 16-7: *Uxorem suam, quam nobilem et pulcrum suasionibus principum invitum duxerat*.

<sup>31</sup> DD HIV; M. Stimming (ed.), *Mainzer Urkundenbuch I: Die Urkunden bis zum Tode Erzbischof Adalberts I (1137)* (Darmstadt, 1932) (hereafter *MU*), no. 322 (June 1069); W. Giesebrecht and E.L.B. von Oefele (eds.), *Annales Altahenses maiores*, MGH SS rer Germ 4 (Hannover, 1890), a.1069, p. 78; Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, pp. 105-6.

<sup>32</sup> RI III,2,3, no. 516.

<sup>33</sup> I.S. Robinson, *The Annals of Lampert of Hersfeld* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 1-48; T. Struve,

imperial monastery, Lampert was often critical of Henry.<sup>34</sup> Yet he wrote about Bertha more often than many of his contemporaries. This is probably attributable to Bertha's extended stay at Hersfeld during the Saxon Rebellion (1073-75). Bertha gave birth to her son, Conrad (1074-1101), at this abbey: he was baptised at Hersfeld and Abbot Hartwig (r.1072-90) was his godfather.<sup>35</sup> Even if Lampert did not have any personal dealings with Bertha, this connection presumably put her on Lampert's radar.

According to Lampert, in June 1069 Henry held an assembly at Worms at which he declared to the princes of the realm that he wished to end his marriage to Bertha. Henry explained that:

he did not live in harmony with his wife. He had long concealed this from the eyes of men but he was unwilling to conceal it any longer. He could not allege any offense on her part that justly merited a divorce [*repudium*] but – he was uncertain through what misfortune or what divine judgement – he was unable to have marital relations with her. For that reason he begged them in God's name to free him from the chains of this ill-omened marriage and patiently to allow a separation to take place so that she might open the way for him, and he for her, to a happier marriage [*felicius matrimonium*] if God so willed it.<sup>36</sup>

Given the tenuous nature of the sources, it is often difficult to draw conclusions about the emotional satisfaction that medieval couples may or may not have gained from their marriages.<sup>37</sup> Yet Lampert's description of Henry's lack of harmony with Bertha, and his desire to find a *felicius matrimonium* elsewhere, has had a decisive impact on subsequent historians,

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'Lampert von Hersfeld. Persönlichkeit und Weltbild eines Geschichtsschreibers am Beginn des Investiturstreits', *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 19 (1969), pp. 1–123; and 20 (1970), pp. 32–142.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Lampert*, pp. 13–4; Struve, 'Lampert', esp. p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1074, p. 174; Bühler, 'Kaiser', pp. 49–50.

<sup>36</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 106; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. Gillingham, 'Love, Marriage and Politics in the Twelfth Century', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, xxv (1989), pp. 292–303.

who often interpret Henry's motives in emotional terms. Michael Borgolte, for example, understands *felicius* to mean 'happier' and sees Henry's assertion as an expression of the 'new conception of love' (*neue Liebesauffassung*) which emerged in the central Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup>

Henry attempted to have his marriage to Bertha dissolved on the grounds of non-consummation. According to Lampert,

Lest anyone should object that once [Bertha's] chastity had been violated, there was an obstacle to her marrying again, [Henry] confirmed on oath that he had kept her as he had received her, undefiled and in a state of unimpaired virginity.<sup>39</sup>

That Henry emphasized Bertha's virginity, rather than accusing her of sexual impropriety, has been seen as a sign of his 'noble attitude' (*noble Haltung*).<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, however carefully expressed, Henry's attempt to repudiate Bertha damaged her status and reputation.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Henry's refusal to accuse Bertha of adultery was also self-serving. An accusation of adultery did not simply impugn the woman in question, but also her lover and, perhaps especially, her husband.<sup>42</sup> In arguing that their marriage was unconsummated, Henry was thus not simply protecting *Bertha's* reputation, he was protecting his own. Since Henry was known to have mistresses, and thought to have fathered at least one illegitimate child by 1069, it is unlikely that contemporaries believed Henry to be impotent.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, in Lampert's account it is emphasised that Henry's marriage remained unconsummated not because he was physically incapable, but because he was *unwilling*.

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<sup>38</sup> M. Borgolte, 'Faction. Eine Erzählung vom salischen Königtum und das Problem von Fakten und Fiktionen', in F.-R. Erkens and H. Wolff (eds.), *Von Sacerdotium und Regnum. Festschrift für E. Boshof* (Cologne, 2002), pp. 401-2; also Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 116: 'happier marriage'.

<sup>39</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 106; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 117.

<sup>40</sup> Tellenbach, 'Charakter', p. 349 (quote); Bühler, 'Heinrich' p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> Zey, 'Scheidung', p. 170.

<sup>42</sup> G. Bühler-Thierry, 'La reine adultère', *Cahiers de civilisation Médiéval* 35 (1992), pp. 299-327; T. Reuter, 'Sex, Lies and Oath-helpers: the Trial of Queen Uota', in idem, *Medieval Politics & Modern Mentalities*, ed. J.L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2006), esp. pp. 224-5.

<sup>43</sup> MvK, vol. IV, p. 377; Tellenbach, 'Charakter', p. 349.

Contemporary narrative sources rarely mention Bertha. Neither Lampert, nor the anonymous author of the *Annales Altahenses*, refers to Bertha's response to Henry's declaration at Worms. Yet according to Archbishop Siegfried of Mainz, who presided over the assembly, Bertha was also present. The princes asked Bertha whether what Henry said was true and she acknowledged that it was.<sup>44</sup> It is possible that this was the case: after three years of marriage Henry and Bertha had no children together, and other studies have indicated that medieval couples sometimes waited to consummate a marriage, particularly when the bride was young.<sup>45</sup> Yet many of Henry's diplomas from 1066 and 1067 were issued 'at the intervention of Queen Bertha, most beloved consort of our kingdom and our bedchamber' (*ac interventum Berhtę reginae regni thorique nostri consortis dilectissimae*).<sup>46</sup> References to Bertha as the 'sharer of [Henry's] bedchamber' (*consors thori*) implied that they had shared a bed, and had thus consummated their marriage. This could simply be a notarial formula, yet it appears to have mirrored actual practice: while Henry was attempting to end his marriage to Bertha, notaries ceased to refer to her as his *consors thori*.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the diplomatic evidence suggests that Henry had been distancing himself from Bertha, and perhaps looking for a way to dissolve their marriage, for some time before the assembly at Worms.<sup>48</sup>

The number of interventions a queen made in her husband's diplomas, and the titles by which she was referred in those diplomas, are often seen as indices of her political power.<sup>49</sup> The titles *consors regni* and *consors thori* encapsulated Bertha's official status, both in the realm and in relation to Henry. *Consors thori* was a relatively new innovation: it was first used

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<sup>44</sup> MU, no. 322: *quod inquisitum cum et ipsa fateretur*.

<sup>45</sup> Borgolte, 'Faction', pp. 395-6; Duby, *Knight*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>46</sup> DD HIV, nos. 182 (1066), 184, 187-188, 191, 193, 197-200, 202, 203 (14 May 1068).

<sup>47</sup> This is partly attributable to a change in chancellor: Sigehard [D] often referred to Bertha as *consors thori* (above n.46), but ceased writing documents after 1068. Pibo once referred to Bertha as *consors thori* (DD HIV, no.203), but afterwards ceased using this title (nos. 204, 206, 208, 213 [1068]).

<sup>48</sup> Bühler, 'Kaiser', pp. 41-2, 46; Robinson, *Henry*, p. 109; A. Gawlik, *Intervenienten und Zeugen in den Diplomen Kaiser Heinrichs IV. (1056-1105)* (Munster, 1970), pp. 189-91.

<sup>49</sup> A. Fössel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich. Herrschaftsausübung, Herrschaftsrechte, Handlungsspielräume* (Stuttgart, 2000), pp. 123-150; S. Gilsdorf, *The Favour of Friends: Intercession and Aristocratic Politics in Carolingian and Ottonian Europe* (Leiden, 2014), esp. pp. 116-124.

in connection with Henry's mother, Agnes, in an imperial diploma issued in November 1048, two years after her imperial coronation.<sup>50</sup> This formula made explicit that the source of a queen's or empress's power lay in sharing the royal marriage bed; it also, implicitly, emphasised her duty to bear throne-worthy children.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, *consors regni* ('sharer/partner in the kingdom') was originally used to refer to the ruler's son in the Late Roman and Carolingian empires. From the mid-ninth century onwards it began to be applied to queens/empresses, and was used particularly frequently in relation to the wives of Ottonian and Salian rulers.<sup>52</sup> The *consors regni* formula is often seen as a reflection of the queen's institutional status, but Simon MacLean has recently emphasised that it was also a strategy intended to bolster her husband's prestige, particularly at dynastically significant moments.<sup>53</sup> In Bertha's case, however, dynastic tensions did not lead to an increased use of the *consors regni* (and/or *consors thori*) title, but rather to its absence.

Bertha is presumed to have had less political influence than her predecessors, Agnes, wife of Henry III, or Gisela, wife of Conrad II, because she intervened in fewer of her husband's diplomas.<sup>54</sup> Between 1066 and 1087 Bertha intervened in approx. 22% of his diplomas. By contrast, Agnes intervened in around 45% of Henry III's diplomas, while Gisela intervened in almost 60% of Conrad's.<sup>55</sup> Yet between 1066 and late 1068 Bertha intervened in approx. 40% of Henry's diplomas. Bertha's frequent appearance in Henry's diplomata at this time, along with the prestigious title *consors regni thorique*, can be read as sign of her influence and high status in the first years of their marriage. After 14 May 1068 Henry's diplomas ceased to refer to Bertha as his *consors thori*. For a few months thereafter, Bertha continued to appear in

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<sup>50</sup> DD HIII, no. 225.

<sup>51</sup> F-R., Erkens, 'Consortium regni-consecratio-sanctitas: Aspekte des Königinnentums im ottonisch-salischen Reich', in S. Dick (ed.), *Kunigunde-consors regni: Vortragsreihe zum tausendjährigen Jubiläum der Krönung Kunigundes in Paderborn (1002-2002)* (Paderborn, 2004), pp. 79-80.

<sup>52</sup> Erkens, 'Consortium'; Fössel, *Königin*, pp. 56-66.

<sup>53</sup> S. MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford, 2017), esp. pp. 7-10, 117-125, 160-169, ch.8.

<sup>54</sup> Zey, 'Frauen', pp. 73-4; Tellenbach, 'Charakter', p. 351.

<sup>55</sup> Fössel, *Königin*, p. 125.

Henry's diplomas, still entitled *consors regni* and referred to as Henry's '(most) beloved spouse' (*dilecta/dilectissima contectalis*).<sup>56</sup> Then, after October 1068, Bertha disappeared from Henry's diplomas completely until late October 1069, when Henry's attempt to dissolve their marriage had failed.<sup>57</sup> As soon as they were reconciled Bertha, entitled *thori regnique noster consors*, intervened in Henry's diplomas once again, although never with the same frequency as before.<sup>58</sup>

Lampert's account and Henry's diplomata suggest that Henry was hoping that his marriage could be ended on the grounds that it was unconsummated through choice. The legal situation was unclear. Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims (r.845-82), argued that marriages which had not been consummated could be dissolved,<sup>59</sup> but many eleventh-century contemporaries argued that it was *consent*, not consummation, which constituted a valid marriage.<sup>60</sup> In any case, the crucial factor which hampered Henry at Worms was not canon law, but the response of the princes, whose agreement Henry was seeking. According to Lampert, the princes were shocked by Henry's desire to repudiate Bertha, finding it 'unseemly and utterly inconsistent with royal majesty'.<sup>61</sup> No conclusion was reached at Worms and a new synod was arranged, to be held at Mainz after Michaelmas in 1069. In the interim Henry travelled east to deal with the rebellion of Dedi I, margrave of Lower Lusatia (d.1075) and his wife, Adela of Louvain (d.1083).

It is worth digressing to consider this rebellion, which is interwoven in Lampert's account both with Henry's attempt to dissolve his marriage to Bertha, and with Eckbert of Brunswick's attempt to end his marriage to Bertha's aunt, Immilla of Turin (discussed below). Dedi's rebellion was primarily a consequence of Henry's new policy towards east Saxony from

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<sup>56</sup> DD HIV, nos. 204 (29 May 1068), 205-206, 208-213 (23 Oct 1068).

<sup>57</sup> DD HIV, no. 214 (3 Jan 1069)-no. 223 (8 Oct 1069). Cf. Gawlik, *Intervenienten*, p. 45 on nos. 218-9.

<sup>58</sup> DD HIV, no. 224 (26 Oct 1069); also n.87 below.

<sup>59</sup> d'Avray, *Marriage*, p. 178.

<sup>60</sup> Duby, *Knight*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>61</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 106; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 117.

1065 onwards.<sup>62</sup> Once he came of age, Henry began to reclaim lands and rights in this region which had been lost during his minority. Unsurprisingly, this created animosity among the Saxon nobility, and Dedi was the first Saxon prince to rebel. In 1069/8 Dedi married Adela of Louvain, widow of Margrave Otto of Meissen (r.1062-67).<sup>63</sup> (See genealogical table 2.) Otto died without male heirs and, after marrying Adela, Dedi tried to claim Otto's benefices. As part of Henry's policy of increasing his rights in Saxony, this claim was denied. Thus, in the summer of 1069, Dedi rebelled along with Adalbert of Ballenstedt, who was married to Adela's daughter, Adelaide.<sup>64</sup>

Lampert described Adela as the driving force behind the rebellion. She was a 'most ferocious wife' (*uxor saevissima*) who 'instilled youthful passions in her husband and taunted him that *if he were a true man*, he would not let injuries go unavenged and should not behave less courageously than her first husband'.<sup>65</sup> Despite this encouragement, Dedi's rebellion was short-lived. Henry led his forces north into Thuringia in July 1069.<sup>66</sup> With the support of Archbishop Siegfried and Otto of Norheim, duke of Bavaria (r.1061-70), Henry quickly forced Dedi to surrender. Henry returned to Tribur by 15 August 1069, well before the planned Michaelmas synod.<sup>67</sup>

Whilst Henry was quashing Dedi and Adela's rebellion, Archbishop Siegfried referred the matter of Henry's marriage to Pope Alexander II.<sup>68</sup> Lampert is critical of Siegfried, who was attempting to reassert episcopal control over parishes in Thuringia by reclaiming parish tithes from monasteries, including Lampert's monastery of Hersfeld.<sup>69</sup> According to Lampert,

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<sup>62</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, esp. pp. 63-4, 84-7; MvK, vol. II, pp. 227-32; L. Fenske, *Adelsopposition und kirchliche Reformbewegung im ostlichen Sachsen* (Göttingen, 1977), pp. 22-9.

<sup>63</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 106.

<sup>64</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, 64-5, 74, 85; MvK, vol. I, 617-23; Fenske, *Adelsopposition*, 34-6, 73-4, 76.

<sup>65</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 107; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, pp. 118-9.

<sup>66</sup> *Annales Altahenses*, a.1069, p. 77; Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 108.

<sup>67</sup> DD HIV, no. 218.

<sup>68</sup> MU, no. 322; Zey, 'Scheidung', pp. 167-8.

<sup>69</sup> J. Eldevik, *Episcopal Power and Ecclesiastical Reform in the German Empire: Tithes, Lordship and Community, 950-1150* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 6.

Siegfried was complicit with Henry: before making his announcement at Worms, Henry met in secret with Siegfried and offered him many concessions, including the Thuringian tithes, if Siegfried would support his attempt to repudiate Bertha.<sup>70</sup> Siegfried's own letter to Alexander II, by contrast, paints a different picture. It describes not only the shock of the princes, but also Siegfried's own opposition to Henry's desire to dissolve his marriage. Arnold Bühler argues that the princes cannot have been as shocked as they appeared to be, because Henry was a notorious adulterer.<sup>71</sup> Yet, while it may have been accepted that elite laymen had extra-marital relationships, Siegfried's letter makes clear that Henry's attempt to end his marriage was deeply shocking.

Siegfried's letter to Alexander II emphasized Bertha's status not only as Henry's wife, but also as his *consors regni*: she had been lawfully betrothed to Henry and given a wedding gift (*dos*), she was then royally consecrated and crowned, perhaps by Siegfried himself, and publicly married to Henry.<sup>72</sup> In Siegfried's view, their marriage was full and valid and there was no fault or cause to justify their separation.<sup>73</sup> There was no law requiring papal involvement in the dissolution of a royal marriage, but Siegfried evidently did not wish to proceed without Alexander II's support. He wrote asking Alexander to send a letter granting him the authority to decide the matter at the synod of Mainz. Instead, as evidence of the gravity and sensitivity of the case, Alexander II sent Peter Damian as papal legate to preside over the synod.<sup>74</sup>

According to Lampert, Damian was chosen because he was 'a man most venerable in his age and in the blamelessness of his life'.<sup>75</sup> Damian was prior of the eremitical community of Fonte Avellana (r.1043-72) and cardinal-bishop of Ostia (r.1057-72). He was known for his ability to mediate disputes, and was also an expert on canon law, who frequently wrote about

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<sup>70</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, pp. 105-6. Cf. Zey, 'Scheidung', pp. 164-6.

<sup>71</sup> Bühler, 'Heinrich', pp. 43-4.

<sup>72</sup> Fössel, *Königin*, p. 25; Zey, 'Scheidung', pp. 169-70.

<sup>73</sup> *MU*, no. 322.

<sup>74</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, p. 111; Althoff, *Heinrich*, p. 74; Zey, 'Scheidung', p. 179.

<sup>75</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 109; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 122.



marriage and sexual conduct.<sup>76</sup> Of particular significance in relation to Henry and Bertha was Damian's view that the clergy had a key role to play in resolving marital problems, even, or perhaps especially, when these involved kings.<sup>77</sup> Equally importantly, following the model of the biblical Mary and Joseph, whose marriage he believed remained unconsummated, Damian argued for the indissoluble nature of the marital bond, even for unconsummated marriages.<sup>78</sup> These views strongly suggested that Damian would not decide in Henry's favour.

The planned synod did not take place at Mainz. When Henry discovered that Damian was waiting for him there, he ordered the princes to meet him at Frankfurt instead, where the synod was held in early October 1069. Damian also travelled to Frankfurt and, according to Lampert, he began by blaming Archbishop Siegfried for encouraging Henry to repudiate Bertha.<sup>79</sup> Damian then proceeded to explain Alexander II's views:

What [Henry] was endeavouring to do was most injurious and entirely inconsistent with the conduct of a Christian, to say nothing of a king. If he was not afraid of human laws and the decrees of the canons, he should at least refrain from injuring his own reputation and honour, lest the poison of such a disgraceful example, originating with the king, should contaminate the whole Christian people.<sup>80</sup>

Lampert indicated that Henry's reasons for repudiating Bertha were personal, but he depicted Damian's arguments as primarily political: Damian warned of the political consequences and loss of prestige which would follow if Henry attempted to repudiate Bertha. In particular, Alexander II, 'would never consecrate as emperor a man who had done his utmost to betray the Christian faith by setting so pernicious an example'.<sup>81</sup> These passages explicitly use the

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<sup>76</sup> Zey, 'Scheidung', pp. 179-80; K.G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 120-125.

<sup>77</sup> K. Reindel (ed.), *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 4, 4 vols. (Munich, 1983-1993) (hereafter *Briefe*), vol. 3, no. 102.

<sup>78</sup> *Briefe*, vol. 2, no. 61; vol. 4, no. 172

<sup>79</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 109; Zey, 'Scheidung', pp. 178, 180-1.

<sup>80</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, pp. 109-10; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 122.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

language of moral contagion: Henry was setting a bad example and, because he was king, his immoral behaviour was particularly likely to poison and contaminate others.<sup>82</sup>

The princes assembled at Frankfurt agreed with Damian that Henry should remain married to Bertha, and they added another reason for his doing so: they feared that Henry would anger Bertha's powerful relatives. In their view, Henry 'should not give the queen's kinsmen a reason for rebellion and a just motive for throwing the state [*res publica*] into disorder'.<sup>83</sup> For the German princes what was paramount was not questions of canon law or morality, but that Bertha had powerful backing. Henry should avoid making enemies of her dynasty, who might stir up the kingdom in response.

A further, unspoken, fear was that if Henry could break his solemnly-celebrated alliance with Bertha and her dynasty, how could other princes feel secure in their positions? Here we return to the question of the 'shock' of the princes at Worms. Was this a staged response? Or were they genuinely surprised by Henry's actions? Medieval assemblies were often stage-managed as part of the 'rules of game' of medieval politics, and Lampert claimed that Henry had secured the help of Archbishop Siegfried in advance.<sup>84</sup> Yet Lampert's antipathy to Archbishop Siegfried is clear and his version conflicts with Siegfried's own account. That neither the bishops nor the secular princes sided with Henry suggests that he had failed to consult with them in advance. Henry thought that his royal status meant that the rules did not apply to him, that he could end his marriage without consequences and that the German princes and bishops would rubber-stamp his demands. He was badly mistaken.

Henry was often accused by contemporaries of not paying enough attention to the advice of the princes, but this was not the case at Frankfurt. Faced with the concerted opposition of temporal and ecclesiastical princes, and with Dedi's rebellion fresh in his mind, Henry

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<sup>82</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, p. 112.

<sup>83</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 110; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 123.

<sup>84</sup> G. Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997).

reluctantly reconciled with Bertha.<sup>85</sup> Other royal marriage disputes, including those of Philip I of France and Bertrada of Montfort (1092-1104/10), and Philip II Augustus and Ingeborg of Denmark (1193-1212), often dragged on for years, if not decades.<sup>86</sup> By contrast, Henry's attempt to dissolve his marriage was settled within a matter of months. Thereafter Henry underwent a dramatic volte face. Royal diplomata suggest that Bertha was with Henry fairly continuously over the next few years, during which time they produced a string of children: Adelaide (b.1070), Henry (b.1071), Agnes (b.1072/3) and Conrad (b.1074).<sup>87</sup>

The rest of this paper is concerned with the political factors which might have motivated Henry's actions in 1069. The focus is particularly on the contemporaneous attempts of three other noblemen—Eckbert of Brunswick, Rudolf of Rheinfelden and Welf of Bavaria—to dissolve their marriages, and the role played by Adelaide of Turin, both in Henry's attempt to end his marriage to Bertha and in his decision to reconcile with her.

Although they are not explicitly mentioned in surviving sources, possible factors in Henry's repudiation of Bertha can be derived from the specific motivations for their marriage. These explanations are not mutually exclusive: one, some, or all could have influenced Henry's decision. First, since some contemporaries emphasized that Henry married Bertha only after pressure was brought to bear on him by the princes of the realm, Henry's attempted repudiation of Bertha could be seen as an attempt to assert himself after he reached the age of majority, along with removal from power of figures who were influential during his minority, such as Archbishop Anno of Cologne and Otto of Norheim.<sup>88</sup>

Second, another of the reasons for the marriage was the pressing need to guarantee the succession: if Henry's marriage remained unconsummated, there was no hope that he would have an heir. Third, since Bertha and Henry's marriage is thought to have been contracted, in

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<sup>85</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 110.

<sup>86</sup> Above, n.6.

<sup>87</sup> DD HIV, nos. 224 (26 Oct 1069), 227, 229-231, 240, 242, 247, 254, 257, 259-260, 269 (28 Jan 1074).

<sup>88</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, pp. 52, 110; Bonanate, 'Reti'.

part, to limit the threat posed to the imperial dynasty by the marriage of Beatrice of Tuscany and Godfrey the Bearded, another factor behind Henry's repudiation of Bertha in 1069 may have been Godfrey's declining health.<sup>89</sup> A fourth possibility relates to Henry's own health: he became seriously ill in early November 1067 and was still not fully recovered by Christmas.<sup>90</sup> Henry began to distance himself from Bertha thereafter: by May 1068 he ceased referring to her in his diplomas as the 'beloved consort of our bedchamber'.<sup>91</sup> Henry married Bertha shortly after recovering from a serious illness in 1066.<sup>92</sup> Might this second illness in late 1067 have led Henry to rethink the marriage?

A fifth explanation, with which the rest of this paper is concerned, focuses on Henry's shifting political interests, and on the declining significance of his alliance with Bertha's natal dynasty. A key, but little considered, factor in Henry's attempted repudiation of Bertha, is that at this time Rudolf of Rheinfelden and Eckbert of Brunswick were also attempting to repudiate their own wives, who were, respectively, Bertha's sister, Adelaide of Savoy, and her maternal aunt, Immilla of Turin. While the 'coincidence' of Rudolf's and Henry's attempting to repudiate their respective wives in 1069 has been noted, few scholars have connected this with Eckbert's attempt to end his marriage to Immilla.<sup>93</sup> That three such powerful men attempted to dissolve their marriages to these kinswomen at the same time points towards the potential value of a comparison of Henry's actions with those of Rudolf and Eckbert. Unsurprisingly, however, their attempts to dissolve their respective marriages are recorded in far less detail in contemporary sources than Henry's attempt to repudiate Bertha.

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<sup>89</sup> Goez, *Beatrix*, p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, aa.1067, 1068, pp. 104-5; MvK, vol. I, p. 573.

<sup>91</sup> Above n.47.

<sup>92</sup> Above n.30.

<sup>93</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, p. 110; Althoff, *Heinrich*, p. 73; Tellenbach, 'Charakter', p. 349. Exceptions are: F. Cognasso, *Il Piemonte nell'età sveva* (Turin, 1968), p. 112; Bonanate, 'Reti'.

## *II: Dissolving Noble Marriages*

According to Lampert of Hersfeld in January 1068 ‘acting against the law and canonical statutes’, Eckbert of Brunswick intended to present his wife, Immilla of Turin, with a ‘bill of divorce’ (*repudium scribere*).<sup>94</sup> Yet ‘death opportunely intervened to prevent his impious efforts’: Eckbert became ill and died of a fever before he was able to put his plan into practice. As with Henry’s attempted repudiation of Bertha, Lampert presents Eckbert’s actions in personal terms. Eckbert hoped to marry a young widow, Adela of Louvain (who later married Dedi of Lower Lusatia), because ‘she seemed to be of greater elegance and beauty [than Immilla] and more suited to his own ferocious disposition’.<sup>95</sup>

Eckbert’s attempt to end his marriage to Immilla took place in early 1068, but Lampert recorded few other events for this year in his *Annals*. Thus, shortly after describing Eckbert’s actions, Lampert turned to Henry’s attempt to end his marriage to Bertha in 1069. Lampert’s close sequential structuring of Eckbert’s and Henry’s attempts to dissolve their marriages, plus his emphasis on their personal motivations, suggest that Lampert intended to draw parallels between the two men. Lampert’s damning verdict on Eckbert was thus a means of framing Henry’s attempt to dissolve his marriage, from the outset, in terms of illegality and impiety. It also presented both Henry’s and Eckbert’s attempts to end their marriages in terms of Saxon politics.

Lampert is the only source to record Eckbert’s attempt to repudiate his wife. Assuming that the account of Eckbert’s actions was not simply invented by Lampert as a way of ramming home his point that Henry’s behaviour was unacceptable, why did Eckbert try to end his marriage to Immilla? Unlike the other couples discussed in this paper (who had no children or only daughters), Immilla was the mother of Eckbert’s son and heir, Eckbert II (c.1060-1090).

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<sup>94</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1068, p. 105; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 116.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. On Adela’s ‘ferocious disposition’: above, n.65.

This suggests that there were strong factors motivating Eckbert's attempted dissolution of their marriage. Enrico Bonanate argues that Eckbert wanted to repudiate Immilla because he could see that her dynasty was already falling out of favour with Henry.<sup>96</sup> Yet Henry's displeasure with Bertha did not become apparent until May 1068.<sup>97</sup> It is unlikely that in late 1067 Eckbert could have anticipated that Henry would try to repudiate Bertha in the summer of 1069.

Eckbert's motivation is more likely to be related to his desire to marry Adela of Louvain. For Eckbert and Adela were not only personally well-suited; their prospective marriage was also politically significant. Adela's previous husband, Otto of Meissen, had died without a male heir, and Henry IV invested Eckbert as margrave of Meissen in his place.<sup>98</sup> This new appointment meant that Eckbert was now firmly orientated towards territory in the north and east of Germany, where an alliance with Immilla's northern Italian kin was of little benefit to him. Through marriage to Adela, Eckbert aimed to ensure his supremacy in his new mark. Although Eckbert died before he was able to repudiate Immilla and marry Adela, the importance of this alliance can be seen in the fact that Eckbert II, who inherited the mark of Meissen on his father's death, later married Oda, daughter of Adela of Louvain and Otto of Meissen.<sup>99</sup>

According to two southern German accounts, a year after Eckbert's death, in 1069 Rudolf of Rheinfelden attempted to repudiate his wife, Adelaide of Savoy, on the grounds of adultery. The *Annales Weissenburgenses* (*Annals of Weissenburg*, written up to 1075) state simply that Adelaide was 'falsely accused of not protecting her chastity and was deprived of her husband and her honour'.<sup>100</sup> The Continuation of the *Annales Sangallenses maiores* (*Greater Annals of St Gall*, written up to 1102) specifies that Adelaide was 'reputed to have

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<sup>96</sup> Bonanate, 'Reti'.

<sup>97</sup> Above, n.47.

<sup>98</sup> Robinson, *Henry*, pp. 4, 80.

<sup>99</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1067, p. 105.

<sup>100</sup> *Annales Weissenburgenses*, in Holder-Egger, *Lamperti Opera*, a.1069, p. 55: *Adalheid coniux Rudolphi ducis, quod castitatem non servaverit, falso accusato et marito et honore privata est.*

committed the crime of adultery with Count Werner [of Hapsburg?], a relative of [Rudolf's].<sup>101</sup> According to both accounts, Rudolf was reconciled with Adelaide in 1071, after she was cleared of the accusation of adultery in the presence of Pope Alexander II.<sup>102</sup> Here again the St Gall Continuation supplies more detail, recording that Rudolf and Adelaide were reconciled after Werner successfully underwent a trial by boiling water.<sup>103</sup>

As with the attempted repudiations of Bertha and Immilla, there is little evidence of Adelaide's agency in this process. It is not clear whether Adelaide actually committed adultery, or whether the accusation was politically-motivated, much less if she wished to be reconciled with Rudolf in 1071. There was a long tradition of accusing medieval queens of adultery, particularly with one of the king's important councillors.<sup>104</sup> These accusations were political: the criticism was sometimes directed against the queen and the power of her natal family, and/or with the aim of de-legitimising her children, but more often against the king himself. Was the same true for accusations of adultery made against the wife of a magnate (and future anti-king)? Was this an attempt to impugn Rudolf's honour, as much as that of his wife?

A letter written by the *scholasticus* Wenric of Trier c.1080/1 suggests that this may have been the case.<sup>105</sup> Wenric wrote to chastise Pope Gregory VII (r.1073-85) for deposing Henry as king and enthroning Rudolf in his place. According to Wenric, Rudolf was a *rex adulterinus* (false, or adulterous, king) who, among other crimes, had three wives, each of whom was alive at the same time (*tres uxores ... eodem simul tempore uiuentes*).<sup>106</sup> In addition to linking Rudolf's sexual activities with his fitness to rule, Wenric's letter also raises another

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<sup>101</sup> St Gall Continuation, a.1070, in Hlawtischka, 'Herkunft', p. 192: *Uxor Rudolphi ducis quasi de commissio crimine adulterii cum Werinhario commite [sic] sui cognato infamata*. Hlawitschka, 'Herkunft', pp. 193-4 identifies him as Werner of Hapsburg based on entries in the *Acta Murensia* (c.1140-1160).

<sup>102</sup> *Annales Weissenburgenses*, a.1071, p. 55: *Rudolfus Suevorum dux coniugem suam, quam per malam famam abiecit, coram Alexandro papa expurgatam iterum recipit*.

<sup>103</sup> St Gall Continuation, a.1070, in Hlawtischka, 'Herkunft', p. 192: *Quam postea simili lutam uoto dominus papa crimine securam reddidit. Cuius rei etiam securitatem predictus comes ferventer aque iudicio probavit*.

<sup>104</sup> Above, n.42.

<sup>105</sup> Wenric of Trier, *Epistola sub Theoderici episcopi Viridunensis nomine composita*, ed. K. Franke, MGH Ldl 1 (Hannover, 1891), pp. 284-299.

<sup>106</sup> Wenric, *Epistola*, pp. 291, 294.

possibility: that Rudolf, like Eckbert, hoped to repudiate his wife in order to marry someone else. Rudolf's first attested wife is Matilda of Germany, sister of Henry IV, his second is Adelaide of Savoy.<sup>107</sup> No other source indicates that Rudolf had a third wife, let alone three at the same time, but if Wenric is partially correct, then there are different possibilities: 1) Matilda was not Rudolf's first wife, 2) during the period when he was separated from Adelaide (1069-71), Rudolf attempted to marry again, 3) after Adelaide died in 1079 Rudolf married again, shortly before his own death in October 1080.<sup>108</sup> If Rudolf was attempting to remarry c.1069, might he have been the source of the accusations against his wife?

### ***III: Kinship, 'Contagion' and the Dissolution of Elite Marriages***

An obvious linking factor in these three attempted repudiations is Adelaide of Turin, who was Bertha's and Adelaide's mother, and Immilla's sister. One of the motives for Bertha's, Adelaide's and Immilla's marriages was a political alliance with Adelaide of Turin, ruler of the mark of Turin.<sup>109</sup> Like her contemporaries, Beatrice of Tuscany (c.1020-76) and her daughter, Matilda of Tuscany (1046-1115), Adelaide of Turin was a great heiress, and the head of a margravian dynasty, who played a decisive role in politics not only in Turin, but also in the empire more widely.<sup>110</sup> Adelaide maintained good relationships with the papacy, corresponding with several eminent churchmen, including Pope Alexander II, Pope Gregory

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<sup>107</sup> Above n.21.

<sup>108</sup> Hlawitschka, 'Herkunft', p. 181 n.22; MvK, vol. III, p. 413 n.113.

<sup>109</sup> On Adelaide, above nn.15,23; below n.112.

<sup>110</sup> Goetz, *Beatrix*; D.J. Hay, *The Military Leadership of Matilda of Canossa 1046-1115* (Manchester, 2008). On the political centrality of other elite medieval women: T. Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia, PA, 1999); C. Zey (ed.), *Mächtige Frauen? Königinnen und Fürstinnen im europäischen Mittelalter (11.-14. Jahrhundert)* (Memmingen, 2015).



VII (r.1073-85), and Peter Damian.<sup>111</sup> She also supported her son-in-law, Henry IV, in the later political crises of his reign: at Canossa in 1077 and in the Italian wars of the 1080s.<sup>112</sup>

Yet in 1068-71 not only Henry, but also Eckbert and Rudolf, attempted to dissolve their politically-motivated alliances with Adelaide of Turin's dynasty. It is not clear why this was the case. When Henry married Bertha he was trying to strengthen his position and hoped to gain support from Adelaide. Did she expect too much in return? Did she provide less support than Henry had hoped? Did Henry, like Eckbert, feel that an alliance with his wife's northern Italian kin was of little benefit to him, once his focus was primarily on Saxony? Or was the repudiation of Adelaide's kinswomen precipitated by a crisis in her rule? None of the surviving sources provide clear answers to these questions. Francesco Cognasso suggests there may have been questions over the dowry of one or all of the women, or disputes about territory in northern Italy.<sup>113</sup> It is certainly possible that Adelaide was experiencing financial difficulties in the mid-to-late-1060s, which meant that she was unable to honour the dowry agreements she had made for her daughters. In addition to her daughters' dowries, Adelaide had the further expense of providing weddings for her sons, Peter and Amadeus.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, precisely when she needed it the most, Adelaide seems to have lost control of an unauthorized mint at Aiguebelle.<sup>115</sup>

Adelaide was also financing military activity in Asti, where she was engaged in a long-running conflict, c.1066-70. Asti was an episcopal city, which fell within Adelaide's jurisdiction, but where she had lost power in the early part of her rule. Just as Henry was trying to reassert his position in Saxony from 1065 onwards, in the 1060s Adelaide was attempting to

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<sup>111</sup> P. Jaffé and S. Loewenfeld, eds., *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum 1198* (Leipzig, 1885-1888, revised ed.), no. 115 (1066/7); *Das Register Gregors VII.*, ed. E. Caspar, MGH Epp. sel, 2, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1920-1923), I.37 (7<sup>th</sup> December 1073); *Briefe*, vol. 3, no. 114 (1064).

<sup>112</sup> A. Creber, 'Women at Canossa. The Role of Royal and Aristocratic Women in the Reconciliation between Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV of Germany (January 1077)', *Storicamente* 13 (2017), no. 13, pp. 1-44, freely accessible at: <<http://storicamente.org/creber-women-canossa>>.

<sup>113</sup> Cognasso, *Piemonte*, p. 112.

<sup>114</sup> Above, n.20. Unlike Adelaide's other children, Amadeus did not contract an imperial marital alliance: Bonanate, 'Reti'.

<sup>115</sup> C. Ducourthial, 'Géographie du pouvoir en pays de Savoie au tournant de l'an Mil', in C. Guilleré, et al (eds.), *Le royaume de Bourgogne autour de l'an mil* (Chambéry, 2008), pp. 237-8.

impose her rule more firmly in Asti. One of the ways she did this was by intervening in the episcopal election. Adelaide's candidate was Ingo, but Pope Alexander II questioned the legitimacy of Ingo's consecration.<sup>116</sup> While Adelaide's actions in Asti are thus sometimes seen as anti-papal, the conflict was more about her increasing intervention in the city than about reform.<sup>117</sup> This dispute, which was ongoing while Henry tried to end his marriage to Bertha, culminated in Adelaide's besieging and burning of the city of Asti in April 1070, and her forcible installation of Ingo as bishop.<sup>118</sup>

The view that a crisis in Adelaide's rule encouraged Henry, Eckbert and Rudolf to repudiate their respective wives is speculative, but comparison with the repudiation of another noblewoman, Ethelinde of Norheim, by her husband, Welf IV of Bavaria, strongly suggests that this may have been the case.

In 1062 Welf IV married Ethelinde of Norheim, daughter of Otto of Norheim, duke of Bavaria (r.1061-70). Otto was a highly influential figure during Henry IV's minority, but in May 1070 he was accused, perhaps by Henry himself, of being part of a plot to murder the king.<sup>119</sup> Otto fell from grace and forfeited the duchy of Bavaria, and Welf lost no time in distancing himself from his wife and father-in-law.<sup>120</sup> Lampert is one of the main sources for this, and he thus bookends his account of Henry's attempt to dissolve his own marriage (1069) with Eckbert's (1068) and Welf's (1070) attempts to end their respective marriages. In fact, Lampert dates Welf's repudiation of Ethelinde to early 1071 but it is clear, both from Lampert's text and the *Annales Altahenses*, that Welf repudiated Ethelinde in 1070. According to Lampert, Welf believed it was worth enduring 'the reproach of oath-breaking and the shame

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<sup>116</sup> Above, n.111.

<sup>117</sup> R. Bordone, *Città e territorio nell'alto medioevo. La società astigiana dal dominio dei Franchi all'affermazione comunale* (Turin, 1980), pp. 339, 343-4.

<sup>118</sup> Arnulf of Milan, *Liber gestorum recentium*, ed. C. Zey, MGH SS rer. Germ. 67 (Hannover, 1994), III.7, pp. 173-174; Bordone, *Città*, pp. 331, 335-40.

<sup>119</sup> Althoff, *Heinrich*, pp. 75-80; Robinson, *Henry*, pp. 65-70.

<sup>120</sup> MvK, vol. II, p. 25; Robinson, *Henry*, p. 70.

of breach of faith' in order to disassociate himself from his father-in-law, Otto, after he was stripped of his lands and titles in August 1070.<sup>121</sup> Then, instead of claiming the duchy of Bavaria through marriage to Ethelinde, Welf 'separated [Otto's] daughter [Ethelinde] from his embraces and from the companionship of the marriage bed and sent her back to her father'.<sup>122</sup> As with Eckbert's attempted repudiation of Immilla, no legal grounds for Welf's actions are cited, but Welf's marriage was dissolved without recorded difficulties. Finally, at the intervention of Rudolf of Rheinfelden, Welf received the duchy of Bavaria from Henry at Christmas 1070.<sup>123</sup>

Welf's repudiation of Ethelinde raises several important points. First, the crucial impetus to Welf's actions was his father-in-law's loss of office and status which meant that, for dynastic and political reasons, Welf no longer wished to be associated with Ethelinde. It suggests that the attempted repudiations of Adelaide's kinswomen may similarly have been politically-motivated. Second, Rudolf may well have encouraged Welf to repudiate Ethelinde. According to the *Annales Altahenses* royal councillors urged Welf to end his marriage to Ethelinde, as only then would he be trusted to receive the duchy of Bavaria.<sup>124</sup> Although he is not named, it is likely that Rudolf was one of these royal councillors: other accounts emphasize that it was through Rudolf's intervention that Welf gained the duchy of Bavaria, and his role in bringing about Welf's second marriage to Judith of Flanders.<sup>125</sup>

If Rudolf, who was still attempting to end his marriage to Adelaide of Savoy in 1070, played a role in Ethelinde's repudiation, this suggests that these would-be 'divorcées' were reinforcing one another. The interconnected nature of elites in eleventh-century Germany meant that the end of one marriage could promote the dissolution of others both by changing

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<sup>121</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1071, p. 118; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, 135.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1071, pp. 118-9.

<sup>124</sup> *Annales Altahenses*, a.1071, p. 80.

<sup>125</sup> St Gall Continuation, a.1071, in Hlawitschka, 'Herkunft', p. 217 n.187; MvK, vol. II, p. 27.

the norms of behaviour regarding marriage within a given social network, and by altering perceptions of the desirability of maintaining political alliances through particular marriages. The cluster of repudiations between 1068 and 1071 suggests that once Eckbert attempted to dissolve his marriage to Immilla, it became increasingly thinkable for other men to end their own marriages. And perhaps not only thinkable, but also *desirable*. Whether or not Eckbert's repudiation of Immilla was brought about by a crisis in Adelaide of Turin's rule, it precipitated a further loss of status and power for her dynasty. This positive feedback loop increased the likelihood that other men would attempt to repudiate her kinswomen. It is unlikely that Rudolf, in particular, would have proceeded against his wife and her natal family, to whom the king was also related by marriage, if Henry had not already made a move to dissolve his own marriage.<sup>126</sup>

This model of 'contagious divorce' is clearest in relation to the husbands of Adelaide of Turin's kinswomen. Yet, despite the discouraging precedent set by Henry's failure to dissolve his marriage in 1069, Welf's connection with Rudolf suggests that this may have played a part in his repudiation of Ethelinde, too. The contagion model of divorce also applies, at least anecdotally, to other medieval elites, particularly in terms of the impact of loss of political support for a dynasty, and mutual reinforcement among couples hoping to end their marriage to members of a particular dynasty. In mid-twelfth-century France, for example, the sisters Petronilla and Eleanor of Aquitaine were repudiated within a year of each other by the cousins, Ralph of Vermandois, seneschal of France and Louis VII of France.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, in 856 Ingiltrude, daughter of Matfrid of Orléans, left her husband, Boso of Italy, and turned to her relative, Lothar II of Lotharingia for support.<sup>128</sup> The following year, Lothar II began his long and unsuccessful attempt to repudiate Boso's sister, Theutberga.

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<sup>126</sup> Up to 1070 Rudolf was a supporter of Henry's: Hlawitschka, 'Herkunft', pp. 217-8.

<sup>127</sup> Duby, *Marriage*, pp. 54-72.

<sup>128</sup> R. Stone, "'Bound from Either Side': the Limits of Power in Carolingian Marriage Disputes, 840-70", *Gender & History* 19 (2007), pp. 467-482.

Third, after rejecting Ethelinde, Welf was able to contract a more advantageous marriage. Around 1071 Welf married Judith of Flanders (c.1030/5-95), who was both phenomenally wealthy and well-connected.<sup>129</sup> This has clear parallels with Eckbert of Brunswick, who attempted to repudiate Immilla in order to marry Adela of Louvain, and perhaps also with Rudolf, who may have attempted to marry again c.1069. Did Henry also have a better prospect in sight? According to Lampert, Henry hoped to contract a *felicius matrimonium*.<sup>130</sup> This phrase has been interpreted in personal terms, but it is not clear that this is what Lampert (much less Henry) intended. *Felicius* also means ‘more fortunate’, ‘more favourable’ and even ‘more fertile’: this could suggest that Lampert was referring to a marriage which would bring Henry greater political benefit, by alliance with another dynasty and/or by the production of an heir. In light of Henry’s increased focus on his rights in Saxony from 1065 onwards, and the unrest that this was creating among the Saxon nobility, Henry (like his cousin, Eckbert) may have hoped to marry a Saxon noblewoman to consolidate his position in this key region. Alternatively, like Welf, Henry may have hoped to marry a woman with greater wealth and/or royal connections. This was certainly true of other German rulers: Matilda of Ringelheim’s possession of lands in Westphalia (in Saxony), partly explains why Henry the Fowler dissolved his first marriage, to Hatheburg, in her favour in 909.<sup>131</sup> In Henry IV’s case this remains speculative, but his second wife, Eupraxia-Adelaide (c.1070-1109), whom he married after Bertha’s death, was a Kievan princess with connections to Saxony via her first husband, Henry of the Saxon North Mark (r.1082-87).<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> B. Schneidmüller, “Welf IV. 1101-2001: Kreationen fürstlicher Zukunft,” in D. Bauer, M. Becher and A. Plassmann (eds.), *Welf IV. Schlüsselfigur einer Wendezeit. Regionale und europäische Perspektiven* (Munich, 2004), pp. 14-9.

<sup>130</sup> Above, nn.36, 38.

<sup>131</sup> T. Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover, 2001), pp. 571-2.

<sup>132</sup> H. Rüß, ‘Eupraxia-Adelheid. Eine biographische Annäherung,’ *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54 (2006), 481–518.

Fourth, of the four marriages discussed here, only Welf successfully dissolved his marriage. Eckbert's repudiation of his wife was prevented by his death, but the end of Henry and Rudolf's marriages were prevented by the intervention of temporal and ecclesiastical princes. This indicates the key and continuing importance for women of powerful natal kin: Ethelinde's connections failed her, but Bertha's and Adelaide's did not. They were able to rely upon the support of a powerful relative: Adelaide of Turin.

#### *IV: Adelaide of Turin's Response*

Even if the attempted repudiations of Adelaide of Turin's daughters were precipitated by a crisis in her rule, it is clear that she was still a force to be reckoned with. Although no source explicitly refers to Adelaide's reaction, she travelled to Rome in, or shortly after, the autumn of 1069, and it is likely that she petitioned Alexander II for his help on her daughters' behalf.<sup>133</sup> Adelaide may also have asked Peter Damian, with whom she was on good terms, to intervene.<sup>134</sup> She perhaps also asked Empress Agnes, who was living in Rome as a religious, who was connected to Adelaide by two marital alliances, and who had been responsible for Bertha since her betrothal in 1055.<sup>135</sup> Certainly, Alexander II sent Peter Damian to preside over Henry and Bertha's case, and also ensured that Adelaide of Savoy's trial took place in Rome in 1071, where he himself presided.

In addition to this diplomatic pressure, Adelaide of Turin also applied military pressure. Lampert of Hersfeld referred to the fear of the German princes that Henry's treatment of Bertha would

give the queen's kinsmen a reason for rebellion and a just motive for throwing the state into disorder. For, if they were true men [*si viri essent*], they would

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<sup>133</sup> *Annales Altahenses*, a.1069, p. 78.

<sup>134</sup> Above, n.111.

<sup>135</sup> M. Black-Veldtrupp, *Kaiserin Agnes (1043-1077). Quellenkritische Studien* (Cologne, 1995), pp. 37-8; above nn.11, 20, 25.

undoubtedly – since they disposed of very many weapons and extensive property – cause so great an insult to their daughter [*filia sua*] to be expiated by some extraordinary outrage.<sup>136</sup>

Although Lampert does not name Adelaide, this passage indicates that among all Bertha's kin, it was *her* response which the princes feared. This is apparent both from Lampert's reference to Bertha as *filia sua* ('their/her daughter': Bertha's father, Otto had died several years before this) and also from his use of the phrase 'if they were men' (*si viri essent*), which implicitly acknowledges Adelaide's gender. The phrase is derived from Livy, who used it to mean proving oneself through battle or conquest and/or to avenging an insult or outrage.<sup>137</sup> In Adelaide's case, both meanings are intended. Lampert indicates that although Adelaide was a woman, she was a 'man' in the way that mattered: she would fight to defend her daughter and her family's honour. Many Italian noblewomen played a sanguinary role in eleventh-century politics and it was entirely conceivable to Lampert that Adelaide could commit an 'extraordinary outrage'.<sup>138</sup> Other contemporaries agreed with this assessment. Arnulf of Milan, for example, writing c.1077, called Adelaide a 'truly military *domina*' (*militaris admodum domina*) in relation to her burning of the city of Asti in April 1070.<sup>139</sup>

Although Lampert does not say so explicitly, the logic here is that of the vendetta: the taking of vengeance for (perceived) injuries.<sup>140</sup> Given the intense competition for power and status among medieval aristocrats, the disgrace of one family member could undermine the status of a whole family.<sup>141</sup> Henry's repudiation of Bertha was not only a slight to Adelaide's

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<sup>136</sup> Lampert, *Annales*, a.1069, p. 110; trans. Robinson, *Lampert*, p. 123.

<sup>137</sup> On Lampert's use of Livy: Robinson, *Lampert*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>138</sup> Goetz, *Beatrix*, pp. 72-4, 158-9, 168-9; Hay, *Leadership*; V. Eads, 'Sichelgaita of Salerno: Amazon or Trophy Wife?', *Journal of Medieval Military History* 3 (2005), pp. 72-87.

<sup>139</sup> Above, n.118.

<sup>140</sup> T. Dean, 'Italian Medieval Vendetta', in J. Büchert Netterstrøm and B. Poulsen (eds.), *Feud in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aarhus, 2007), pp. 135-46; G. Halsall, 'Reflections on Early Medieval Violence: the Example of the "Blood Feud"', *Memoria y Civilizacion* 2, 1 (1999), pp. 7-29.

<sup>141</sup> Althoff, *Spielregeln*; G. Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: The Political Importance of Group Bonds in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. C. Carroll (New York and Cambridge, 2004).

daughter, it also diminished Adelaide's own dignity and standing. It was necessary for Adelaide to respond and, more importantly, *be seen* to respond to this attack on her family's honour, or her own position would be jeopardized. Yet it was also necessary that Adelaide's response followed the accepted 'rules of conflict' which aimed to restore harmony rather than lead to further violence.<sup>142</sup> A medieval lord who felt him- or herself to be wronged would often respond, first of all, with a public display of anger. This was not simply an emotional reaction: it was also part of a deliberate strategy. It highlighted the lord's grievance and was a sign that they intended to seek redress. This public display was also intended to activate the lord's kinship and/or friendship networks and to bring about mediation which would resolve the dispute.<sup>143</sup> As is clear from the German princes' fear of Adelaide's reaction, the threat of violence had a strong deterrent quality and was often enough to bring about the desired result. If, at this stage, adequate recompense was made, then no further action was needed.<sup>144</sup> According to Lampert's account, this was the case in 1069: the threat of Adelaide's violence was a key factor in ensuring that Henry reconciled with Bertha.

By contrast, the anonymous author of the *Annales Altahenses* suggests that Adelaide moved beyond threats to actual violence. According to the anonymous annalist, in 1069 Adelaide laid waste to the province and then besieged the city of Lodi, burning churches and monasteries and causing the deaths of thousands of people.<sup>145</sup> The annalist remembered and structured this attack in relation to Henry's attempted repudiation of Bertha. By juxtaposing these events in his narrative, the anonymous author implied that there was a causal link between them: that Henry's treatment of Bertha led to Adelaide's attack on Lodi. There is some debate about whether Adelaide actually attacked Lodi, but if she did, then the attack was a conscious

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<sup>142</sup> G. Althoff, 'The Rules of Conflict Among the Warrior Aristocracy of the High Middle Ages', in K. Esmark et al (eds.), *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 313-32.

<sup>143</sup> S.D. White, 'Clotild's Revenge: Politics, Kinship, and Ideology in the Merovingian Blood Feud', in idem, *Re-Thinking Kinship and Feudalism in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), III, pp.107-30.

<sup>144</sup> Halsall, 'Reflections', esp. p. 23.

<sup>145</sup> *Annales Altahenses*, a.1069, p. 78.



use of violence to assert Adelaide's, and thus her daughter's, position.<sup>146</sup> Lodi was not only an imperial city, but a city in which the bishop had been granted imperial protection.<sup>147</sup> If Adelaide burned the churches of Lodi, along with the rest of the city, this would have shown up the feebleness of Henry's 'protection': it would have been an attack not simply on the city, but on Henry's honour and authority. At the same time, Lodi was strategically significant and, along with the Alpine passes Adelaide already held, possession of Lodi would have left Adelaide in control of many of the major routes between Italy and Germany. If Adelaide attacked Lodi, then she would not only have strengthened her own position and avenged her family's dishonour, but also have threatened the destruction of Henry's access to, and basis of power in, northern Italy.

While the question of whether or not Adelaide actually attacked Lodi remains open, Adelaide certainly brought two different types of pressure to bear on Henry to ensure that her daughter's marriage was not dissolved. The first of these was political pressure: Adelaide called upon her powerful friends, including Empress Agnes, Peter Damian and Alexander II, for support. Yet she did not wait for mediation alone to work: she also applied military pressure. Whether she used force itself, and attacked Lodi, or simply threatened to do so, this threat reinforced the mediation of Adelaide's friends. It improved her bargaining position and increased the likelihood that churchmen and the German princes would also bring political pressure to bear on Henry and thus that Henry, hemmed in by political and military pressure, would reconcile with Bertha.

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<sup>146</sup> Previté-Orton, *History*, pp. 228-9 argues that the *Annales Altahenses* confuse Lodi with Asti, which Adelaide besieged and burned in 1070 (above, n.118).

<sup>147</sup> T. Sickel (ed.), *Die Urkunden Ottos des II.*, MGH Dipl 2 (Hannover, 1893), no. 120; DD HIV, no. 279.

## ***V: Conclusion***

In the period 1068-1071 four different men—Henry IV of Germany, Eckbert of Brunswick, Rudolf of Rheinfelden and Welf IV of Bavaria—each attempted to dissolve their marriages to their respective wives, Bertha of Savoy, Immilla of Turin, Adelaide of Savoy and Ethelinde of Norheim. The argument put forward in this article is that these attempted repudiations can be better understood if the women, as well as the men, involved are considered. Contemporaries, particularly Lampert of Hersfeld, often portrayed these men as acting for personal reasons, but their motivation was also political. There is evidence that each of these men hoped to repudiate his wife in order to contract a *felicius matrimonium*, that is, a more politically advantageous marriage. A key, and hitherto little considered, feature of the attempted repudiations of Bertha, Adelaide and Immilla is that these women were closely related to one another. That three powerful men attempted to dissolve their marriages to these kinswomen at the same time suggests that an alliance with their dynasty was no longer seen as valuable.

This cluster of repudiations may also have been caused, in part, by a ‘contagion model’ of divorce, whereby once Eckbert attempted to repudiate Immilla, it became both possible and desirable for other men to attempt to dissolve their own marriages. Whatever their reasons, some of these men found it hard to ‘break up’ with their wives. The dissolution of Welf’s marriage, and perhaps also Eckbert’s attempt to end his own marriage, suggest that church sanctions could be ignored: neither man appears to have justified ending his marriage in terms of canon law. By contrast, both Henry and Rudolf encountered difficulties when they tried to justify the dissolution of their marriages in Christian terms. Henry and Rudolf evidently wished to remain on good terms with Pope Alexander II and other churchmen, who intervened decisively against dissolving their marriages. This suggests that Henry, and perhaps also Rudolf, had less room for manoeuvre than other laymen. Henry was constrained not only by

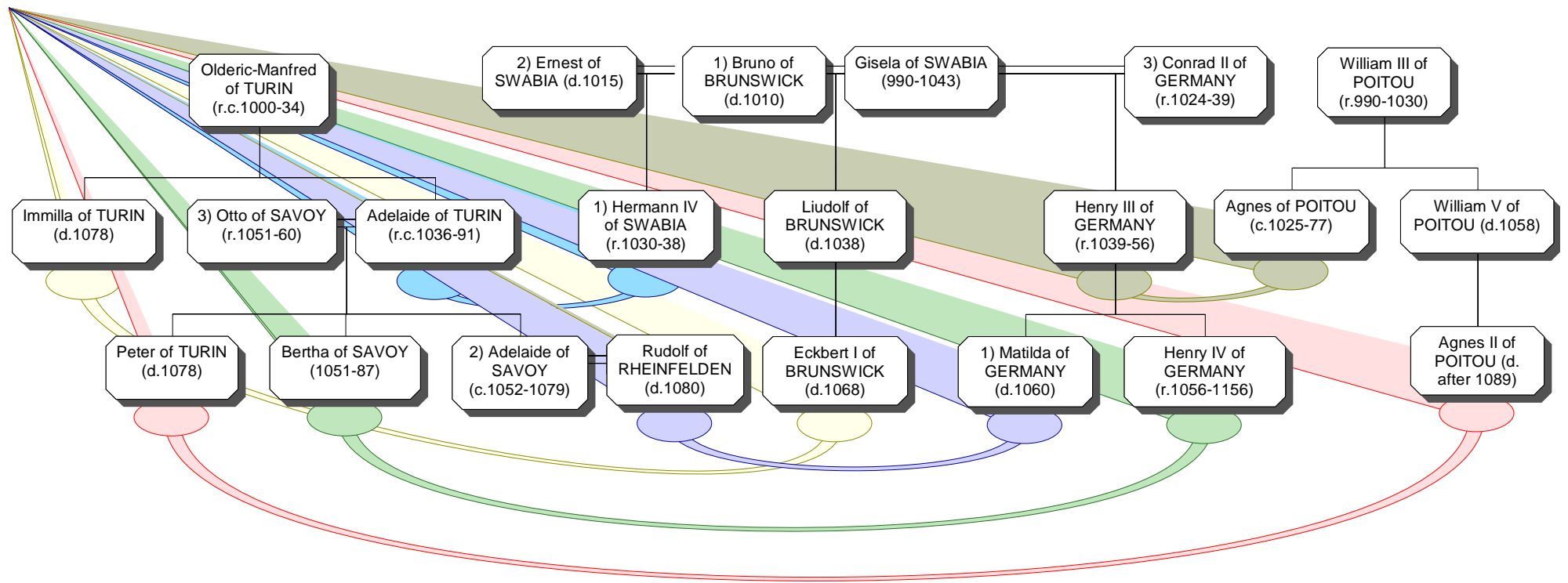
secular and canon law in his attempt to dissolve his marriage, but also by his own and his wife's royal status.

Moreover, contrasting Henry's and Rudolf's inability to end their marriages with Welf's successful repudiation of Ethelinde highlights the importance for women of the support of their natal kin, even after marriage. Unlike Ethelinde's family, Adelaide of Turin was able to leverage her long-standing connections with Empress Agnes, Peter Damian and Alexander II to help ensure that her daughters' marriages were not dissolved. She was also able to bring her military power to bear. Lampert's account indicates that the German princes feared her response, while the *Annales Altahenses* suggests that Adelaide may even have attacked the city of Lodi. This was a form of vendetta, in which threats, or actual violence, were carefully calculated responses to loss of honour and status. In Adelaide's case, the threat of violence, combined with diplomatic pressure, was a key factor in ensuring that her daughters' marriages were not dissolved.

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**Genealogical Table 1: Simplified Genealogical Table Depicting the Intermarriages between  
Bertha of Savoy's Family and Members (or Close Relatives) of the Imperial Dynasty**



**Genealogical Table 2: Simplified Genealogical Table Depicting the Intermarriages between the Dynasties of  
Adela of Louvain, Dedi I of Lower Lusatia, and Eckbert of Brunswick**

